ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON EMPLOYABLE SKILLS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN BENGALURU

Synopsis submitted to CHRIST (Deemed to be University)
as partial requirement for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

MANAGEMENT

by

SHRUTI SRINIVASAN

Under the Supervision of

RAVIKUMAR T

Associate Professor

CHRIST
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
BANGALORE · INDIA

Signature of scholar

Signature of Supervisor

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH
CHRIST (Deemed to be University)
BENGALURU

MARCH 2022

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH

APPROVAL OF PHD SYNOPSIS

(as per clause 11(c.) of CU Regulation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 2019)

Name of Scholar:	Shruti Srinivasan
Department:	School of Business and Management
Name of Supervisor:	Dr. Ravikumar T
Name of Co Supervisor:	

Names of Research Advisory Committee:
1. Dr. Ravikumar T
(Supervisor)

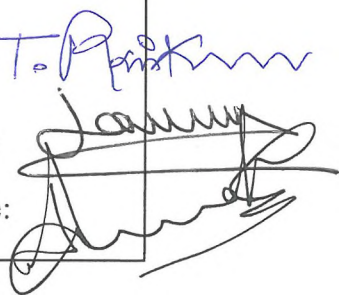
2. Dr. Jain Mathew
(Member)

3. Dr. Kennedy Andrew Thomas
(Member)

Date of Synopsis Presentation:	
Title approved after Synopsis presentation:	

Approved by:

1. Name of RAC Member: Dr. Ravikumar T Signature:
2. Name of RAC Member: Dr. Jain Mathew Signature:
3. Name of RAC member: Dr. Kennedy Andrew Thomas Signature:



Head of Department for delegated Departments
(CU Regulation for Delegation of PhD Programme to Academic Departments 2018)

Date of Approval by Doctoral Committee:

Remarks:

Director Centre for Research

ABSTRACT

With the increase in technology access, the expectations of the employers while hiring the candidates has increased manifold. The candidates however do not possess the required skills as expected by the corporate professionals. The study therefore aims to understand the impact of an employable skill training module based on experiential learning on the soft skill development of management postgraduate students. The study used a one group pretest – post test design. The findings suggest that the training module based on experiential learning module has a significantly large effect on the skills of the participants. Skills like communication skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking and lateral thinking skills can be effectively developed using experiential learning pedagogy. In addition to the above, the modules created a deeper understanding of the strengths, capabilities and the weaknesses of the participants and enabled them to communicate the same effectively thus preparing them for interviews and group discussions. The modules additionally enabled the participants to appropriately use gestures, tone and their voice in formal communication in a manner that can enhance the effectiveness of their communication. The findings of the study have vital implications for the members of the industry as well as the academia. Experiential training methodology is indeed an important pedagogy that trainers and educators must use while imparting knowledge about skills and intelligences.

Key Words: Employable skills, experiential learning, soft skill development, management postgraduates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval of PhD Synopsis ii

ABSTRACT iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS v

LIST OF TABLES vii

LIST OF FIGURES viii

SYNOPSIS 1

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 NEED FOR THE STUDY 2

3 LITERATURE REVIEW 3

3.1 Employability 3

3.2 Employable Skills 5

3.3 Experiential Learning 7

4 RESEARCH GAP 9

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 10

6 OBJECTIVES 11

7 HYPOTHESES 11

8 RESEARCH METHODLOGY 13

8.1 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN PRODECURE 15

8.2 DETAILS OF THE MODULES 20

8.3 STATISTICAL DESIGN 23

9 Analysis 25

10 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS 32

11 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY 35

12 LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY 37

13 CONCLUSION 38

REFERENCES 39

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Results of Systematic Review of Literature..... 7
Table 2 Scales used in preparing the tests 17
Table 3 Modules and skills developed..... 19
Table 4 Overall test results and effect sizes..... 23
Table 5 Component scores and effect sizes 24
Table 6 Oral component scores and effect sizes..... 25
Table 7 Written component scores and effect sizes 25
Table 8 Test results of Repeated Measures ANOVA..... 26
Table 9 Gender wise scores and effect sizes 29
Table 10 Gender wise oral component scores and effect sizes 29
Table 11 Gender wise written component scores and effect sizes..... 30

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 One Group Pretest Post test Design 11
Fig. 2 Experimental Procedure 13

SYNOPSIS

1 INTRODUCTION

The job market today has become highly competitive. With the increase in technology and the availability of information at the tip of one's fingers, the expectations of the employers while hiring the candidates has increased manifold. This therefore brings in the need for the employees or the prospective candidates to mold their skills so as to make them desirable by the companies and hence employable. According to the report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry in India (ASSOCHAM), the employability percentage of the students graduating from the 5,500 Business colleges in India is merely 7%.

In fact, the expectation of the students who enrol for the management programs and the employers who recruit such students through campus recruitment drives, expect that the transference of these skills will take place in the educational environment (Bok, 2006; Heimler, 2010). "The talent problems of the employers, employees and the broader society are intertwined. Employers want the skills they need when they need them, delivered in a manner they can afford. Employees want prospects for advancement and control over their careers" (Cappelli, 2008). The skills required in the workplace today are hardly being developed and gained by the university graduates (Evers, Rush, & Berdrow, 1998).

In order to become employable, it is but imperative for the students of today to learn the essential skills that will enable them to adapt to the workplace environment and keep up with the workplace demands (Echternacht & Wen, 1997). These skills are referred to as non – technical skills and include cognitive skills as well as soft skills including all those competencies that require the candidates to apply their knowledge in the workspace. Earlier, especially prior to the Industrial Revolution a quality worker was note by his ability to perform complex physical tasks. But today, an employee needs

much more than physical strength to survive in the workplace. A number of skills have been identified over time and these skills have not really changed in their nature and need for the industries. Communication, problem solving skills and strategic thinking are some of these skills. (Astin, 1993; Hunt, 1995; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Levy & Cannon, 2016).

While it is important for the students to gain the above – mentioned skills, it is not as easy to gain them due to reasons like lack of interest, lack of affordability, lack of access to appropriate training methods. It is due to this aspect that despite the immense technical knowledge of the subject they possess they are unable to get the required growth in their respective corporate roles.

This situation is particularly true in the case of our country. In response to this problem, this study aims to understand the required nontechnical (soft) skills that the students require to possess in order to gain success in the corporate space. This will in turn be followed by the development of an effective learning structure that can be implemented in the management colleges and universities to impart the knowledge of employable skills to the students.

2 NEED FOR THE STUDY

With the growing competitiveness in the society, there is a current need for preparation and training for the confidence of the candidate during the interview process more than ever before (Reddan, 2008; Moin & Biswal, 2012). Employers expect the candidates to possess the soft skills like communication, strategic thinking, leadership skills, critical thinking and problem solving (Astin, 1993; Reddan, 2008; Levy & Cannon, 2016). Though these skills have proved to be essential through various researches and in various studies, graduates have been noticed to display a lack of the possession of the above – mentioned skills (ASSOCHAM, 2016; Reddan, 2008). A number of institutions are assessed mainly on their candidates and their job placement statistics. It therefore becomes imperative for these institutions to instill these skills in their students during the course period.

The suggestion to include career training in the course syllabus is not new (Stewart & Knowles, 2002). The increasing need for acknowledgement and accreditation of the institutes and their students also presents in itself a profound need for the training of the students thus making them ready for placement and increasing their career readiness. This study therefore aims to understand the skills that are required in the present scenario for the management graduates and postgraduates. The purpose of the study includes the creation of a viable teaching module that can be implemented in the various Indian educational institutions to make the students career ready. With the development of technology and innovative teaching pedagogies, this study aims to generate a viable teaching module for the soft skills that can be taught and practiced by the students on a daily basis through games and simulations. This pedagogy involving games and simulations has been supported by a number of researchers including Nealy (2005) and Proctor (2016). These studies have indicated that the experiential learning techniques like games and simulations provide an effective active learning environment that enable in the successful understanding of the need of soft skills and their effective learning.

The scope of the study includes the understanding of the skill requirements especially for management graduates in Bengaluru. The study also understands the teachability of the skills and the ability for a module creation that can be implemented by the colleges and universities to increase the employability of their management students and graduates.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a brief description of the major concepts of the study: employability, employable skills and experiential learning

3.1 Employability

According to the Confederation of British Industry "employability is the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the

changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realise his or her aspirations and potential in work" (CBI, 2007) along with "the ability to gain and retain fulfilling work" (Hillage and Pollard, 1998).

Employablity is also defined by Romanuik and Snart, 2000 as, "involving determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to work, marketing oneself in order to obtain work, and working competently in order to retain work." Put in simple words, employability refers to the ability of the individuals to recognize job and career opportunities. According to this definition, employability refers to the extent to which the graduates possess the skills, competencies and abilities to obtain jobs and to gain a job and sustain in the job market in the long run (Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth, 2004; Stokes, 2013). In simpler words, according to the definition of employability provided by Rothwell and Arnold (2007), employability is the "ability to keep the job one has or to obtain the job one desires." Thus, the various dimensions which can explain employability are:

- The ability to gain initial employment (Khare, 2016)
- The ability to maintain the job and make transitions as required among various job roles in the organisation (Khare, 2016)
- The ability to obtain new employment if required in other organisations (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Khare, 2016)
- "The ability to remain employable through out one's life", by developing his/her competencies as long as he/she so desires to remain employed (a term called "lifelong learning" by the Scottish government) (Watts, 2006; Khare, 2016)
- The ability to develop in one's chosen career (Khare, 2016)
- "The quality of one's work or employment", in terms of the qualifications required and the pay earned through the employment (Khare, 2016)

Thus, to summarise the meaning of employability in the words of Knight and Yorke (2004), employability is not accomplished after obtaining the first graduate job, but requires to be constantly stimulated in order to be "sustainable".

3.2 Employable Skills

Employability skills have been defined by International Labour Organisation (ILO) as, "portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual's capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions" (ILO, 2004). Employable skills are those transferable skills that enable a prospective candidate to gain employment in the job market.

While hard skills like technical and administrative skills are relatively easier to master through observation and practice, it is the soft skills that are more difficult to learn and absorb (Raj, 2008). Soft skills provide the foundational blocks that majorly contribute to the individual's growth in the career path thus leading to success in the family and social life (Crawford, Lang, Fink, Dalton & Fielitz, 2011). Technical and administrative skills are taught through the educational curriculum or as trained by the organizations to meet their needs and requirements. But, the organizations as well as the educational institutions find it difficult to train the graduates in soft skills mainly due to the concept being abstract and the lack of appropriate teaching and training material and infrastructure available for the same. Therefore, a number of employers have proposed the need of the inclusion of soft skills training as a course in the educational institutions so as to prepare a better a more confident candidate for the organizations (Eisner, 2010).

Soft skills especially communication skills have the most impact on the employability of graduates in every industry (Levy & Cannon, 2016). Soft skills are extremely important for those graduates entering the corporate and business world who have the ambition to become the global leaders of tomorrow. While technical skills are an essential for the graduates to possess, soft skills too play an important role in their employability in the organisations. Soft skills assist in building employee rapport and thus the overall environment in an organisation (Soft Skills for Hard Times, 2004).

There is a gap between the traditional educational system and the industry requirements in terms of skill development and enhancement (Bansal, 2018; Ravan, 2016; Gandhi, 2013). It therefore becomes imperative for the educational institutions to take on the responsibility of training the young minds to adequately acquire the necessary skills through proper training and a relevant teaching pedagogy. (Lowden, Hall, Elliot & Lewin, 2011; Meyers, 2017; Gowsalya and Kumar, 2016).

The industry perceives the possession of necessary skills by the management graduates is not up to the desired level (Bansal, 2018). Buenviaje et. al. (2016) in their study, have provided the challenges that have been faced by various employers during the recruitment of management graduates especially MBA degree holders. The essential skills according to them that have to be possessed by the management graduates are quantitative, analytical and strategic thinking skills. Packinathan and Narayanan (2014), in their study have attempted to formulate a conceptual framework of skills through conducting in – depth reviews over a time period of 20 years between 1994 - 2013. The main findings in their study have been (i) management students require specified job specific skills and (ii) there needs to be a curricular upgradation in the employability skills. The framework included skills like communication, problem solving, team work, planning and organizing skills, negotiating skills and leadership qualities, among others. Similar skill – sets were identified by Cotton (1993); Andelt, Barrett and Bosshamer (1997); Crosling and Ward (2002); Hodges and Burchell (2003); Jackson (2009); Gandhi (2013); Abas and Imam (2016); Srinivasan and Ravikumar (2019) among others.

For the purpose of this study employable skills are defined as, "The essential skills required for a management graduate to become capable of obtaining employment. Examples: Communication skills, leadership skills, critical thinking, problem solving and professionalism."

From the review of literature between the years 1987 – 2022, a number of skills were consistently considered important over this period of time. The skills and the frequency of their appearance based on the result of systematic reviews of literature conducted have been explained in the table below.

Table 1: Table Showing Systematic Review Analysis Results		
Intelligence Components	**Skill Components**	**Frequency**
Linguistic	Formal communication skills (including Oral communication, Written communication, Public speaking and presentation skills)	199
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving	123
	Persuasive ability	20
	Analytical	38
Spatial	Critical thinking	123
	Creative Thinking	73
Musical and Bodily – Kinesthetic	Appropriate use of gestures, tone and voice	NIL
Intrapersonal	Self Awareness	41
Interpersonal	Team work and group effectiveness	158

Though the systematic review was conducted for studies conducted between 1987 – 2022, the above skills were also deemed as necessary until 2030 in studies conducted by Bakhshi, Downing, Osborne & Schneider (2017), Wheebox (2022) and World Economic Forum (2020).

3.3 Experiential Learning

The traditional education system has ingrained the need of memorization and technical knowledge as the base for all education. While knowledge acquisition is important, it is also extremely essential for the students to enhance their skills so as to

make them ready for the work environment. It therefore becomes imperative for the educational institutions to take on the responsibility of training the young minds to adequately acquire the necessary skills through proper training and a relevant teaching pedagogy (Meyers, 2017).

This is where experiential learning becomes the need of the hour. The study by Meyers (2017) has defined experiential learning as, "an activity or simulation of applied curriculum to supplement the classroom learning content." Experiential learning is also known as work – based learning, service – learning and learning through experience. The concept of learning through experience is not a new one. Gentry (1990) emphasized the need for learning by doing. As early as 1938, John Dewey published the necessity for experience in education through his article where he emphasized the two essential principles in experiential education: "continuity and interaction". A number of studies have also been conducted in the recent times about the importance of experiential learning in skill development. A summary of few of such studies has been described below.

One such study is the one by Hoover, Giambatista, and Belkin (2012) which observed the process as well as the implications of the experiential learning process. There were 141 respondents for the study, all of whom were enrolled in a management institute in the US. The group was divided into almost equal respondents of 69 and 72 each. Both the groups were a given a real – time simulation exercise to complete. One group was asked to complete the assignment with the freedom to observe and learn, while the other group had no such opportunity. Upon analysis it was found that the group which was provided the freedom to observe and learn through the process was able to yield better results than the group which did not.

Yet another study by Meyers (2017), studied the implications of the experiential learning on the workforce development skills of secondary school students in a school in the US. In order to measure the effective development of the skills, the participants were given a set of forms to fill in at two different points in the study. The participants were tested on 20 different skills for the success in the workplace. The selected participants were enrolled with a learning group and were provided with experiential learning opportunities with specific sectors like business technology and hospitality.

Analysis of the pre and post experiment questionnaires confirmed that the skill growth indeed happened at the end of the semester long program thus reinforcing the importance of the experiential learning program for the skill development of the students.

Further, Vadhana and Zakkariya (2012) have also highlighted in their study about the importance of development of training modules that can include the feedback and the suggestions of the participants that can help to modify and improve the training module.

Yet another study conducted by Bennett (2007), studied the importance of internship programs in making students employable. This study developed an internship program and implemented it among school students in the Midwestern Cities in the USA. The study found certain interesting facts regarding the success of an internship program and concluded that internship programs were not always successful in developing the occupational engagement of students and making them employable.

Spence and McDonald (2015) conducted a study to understand the importance of physical and mental skill development through internships. The study involved the selection of 16 students from a 64-sample set. These students were required to complete a set of hours on the field and later were asked to fill in their responses and experiences. The experiment successfully brought out the importance of soft skill development through the experiential learning program.

4 RESEARCH GAP

Prior to the main study, the researcher conducted a systematic review of literature to understand the studies that have been conducted in the past. The objective of the review was to understand the contexts, variables, methodology and outcomes of the existing studies. The review of literature also revealed gaps that the current study attempts to fill.

From the review of past literature, it was found that the research about employable skills and their development have been undertaken for a long period of time.

But, majority of these studies have been conducted outside the country with undergraduate and school students as the target population. There is a lack of studies done on the employability skill development on management students in India. The studies done in India highlight the necessary skills required and the possession of the skills by the management students.

Majority of the studies have highlighted the need for experiential learning programs for the development of employable skills. Though some studies have been conducted regarding the same, they are focused on employable skill development of undergraduates and school students. Some of the studies also focus on skill development of engineering and STEM graduates.

This study therefore aims to fill the above – mentioned gaps by conducting a study on the effect of an experiential learning semester long program on postgraduate (MBA) students of Bangalore, India.

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research questions the study aims at solving are:

a) What are the soft skills possessed by the management postgraduates?
b) What are the skills that the corporates expect the management postgraduates to possess in order to become employable?
c) What is the difference between the expectations of the corporates in terms of soft skills and the soft skills possessed by the management postgraduates?
d) How can a soft skills development programme effectively improve the employable skills of the management postgraduates?
e) What are the components and the exercises in the modules that can be implemented for successfully teaching these skills to the management postgraduates?

6 OBJECTIVES

In order to provide an answer to the above research questions, the study has the following objectives:

a) To find out and analyse the soft skills possessed by the management postgraduates
b) To analyse the soft skills that the corporates require the management postgraduates to possess in order to become employable
c) To measure and analyse the difference between the expectations of the corporates in terms of soft skills and soft skills possessed by the management graduates
d) To analyse the role of soft skills development programme on the employable skills of the management postgraduates
e) To measure the effectiveness of the soft skills development programme intervention on employable skills.

7 HYPOTHESES

Based on the theoretical framework and literature, the following hypotheses were formed.

$H_0 1$: There is no difference between the pretest mean scores and the mean post test scores of the participants.

$H_1 1$: There is a difference between the pretest mean scores and the mean post test scores of the participants.

$H_0 2$: There is no difference between the post test mean scores and the mean delayed post test scores of the participants.

$H_1$2: There is a difference between the post test mean scores and the mean delayed post test scores of the participants.

$H_0$3: There is no difference between the pretest mean scores and the mean delayed post test scores of the participants.

$H_1$3: There is a difference between the pretest mean scores and the mean delayed post test scores of the participants.

$H_0$4: There is no difference between the component scores of the pretest and the post test.

$H_1$4: There is a difference between the component scores of the pretest and the post test.

$H_0$5: There is no difference between the component scores of the post test and the delayed post test.

$H_1$5: There is no difference between the component scores of the post test and the delayed post test.

$H_0$6: There is no difference between the component scores of the post test and the delayed posttest.

$H_1$6: There is a difference between the component scores of the post test and the delayed posttest.

$H_0$7: There is no difference between the component scores of the pretest and the delayed post test.

$H_1$7: There is a difference between the component scores of the pretest and the delayed post test.

$H_0$8: There is no difference between the overall scores of the pretest, the post test and the delayed post test.

$H_1$8: There is a difference between the overall scores of the pretest, the post test and the delayed post test.

$H_0$9: There is no difference between the component scores of the pretest, post test and the delayed post test.

$H_1$9: There is a difference between the component scores of the pretest, post test and the delayed post test.

8 RESEARCH METHODLOGY

The current study attempts to analyse the effect of an experiential learning module developed by the researcher on the employable skills of the management graduates. To understand this effect, a single group pretest, post test experimental design was used.

Fig 1: Diagrammatic representation of the One Group Pretest, Post test Design

Where,

X_1 = Pretest

T = Treatment

X_2 = Posttest

X3 = Delayed Post test

The variables of the study have been determined based on the guidelines suggested for educational research by Best and Kahn (1995). It is a known fact that variables are the conditions and characteristics that are controlled by and manipulated by the researcher. "A variable is an event, category, behaviour or an attribute that expresses a construct and has different values, depending on how it is used in a particular study" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). Best and Kahn (1995) have described the dependent and independent variables in educational research. Since the study mainly explores the effect of the soft skills development programme on the employable skills of the MBA students, the definitions by Best and Kahn (1995) for independent and dependent variables apply to this study as well.

"A variable affected or expected to be affected by the independent variable is called the dependent variable" (Fraenkal and Wallen, 2006). The dependent variables are in turn the conditions and the characteristics that can be altered with the changes in the independent variables, for example test scores, or the speed of performing a given task. Based on these definitions the following dependent and independent variables have been used in the study. **The dependent variable for the study is Employable Skills and the independent variable is Soft Skills Development Programme.**

8.1 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN PRODECURE

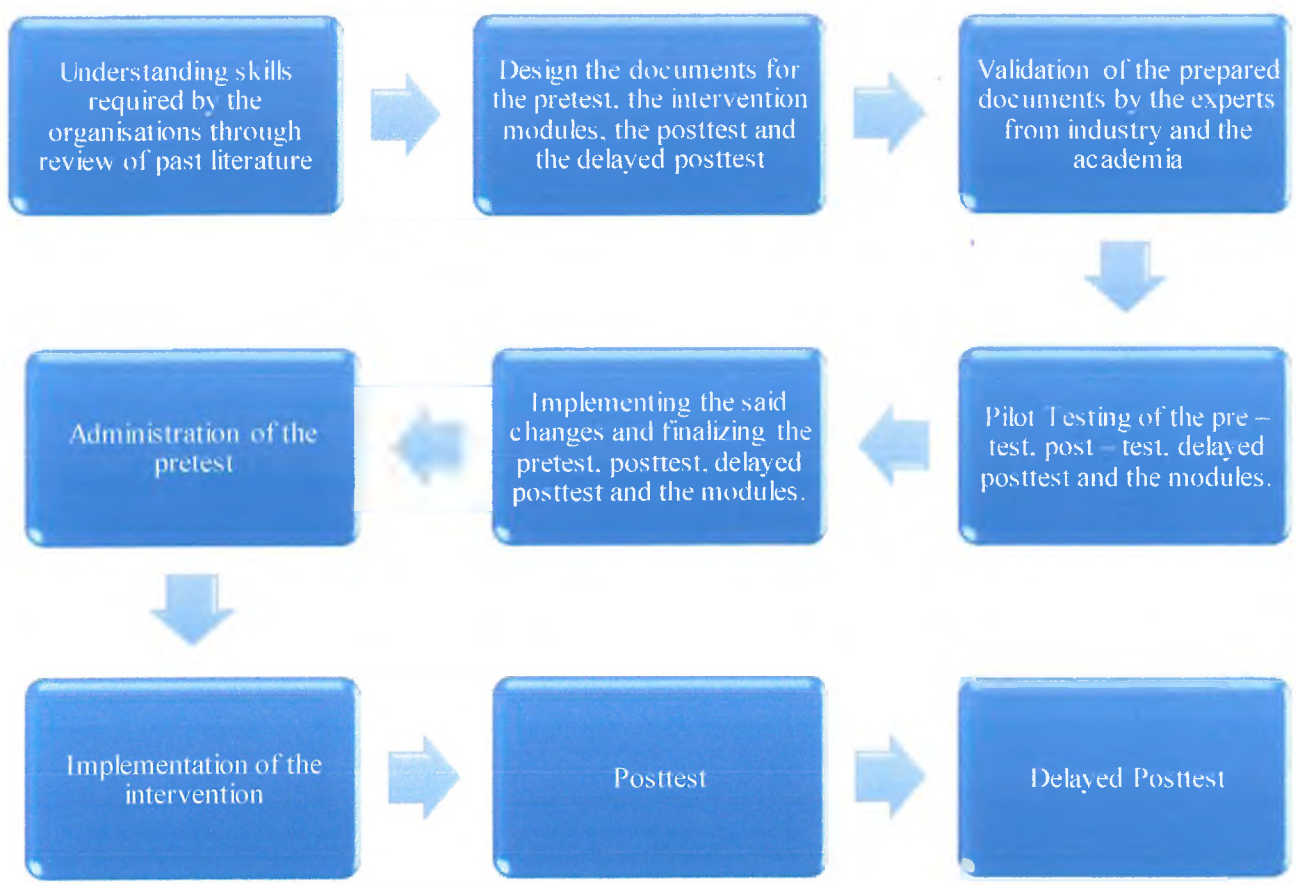

Understanding skills required by the organisations through review of past literature
Design the documents for the pretest, the intervention modules, the posttest and the delayed posttest
Validation of the prepared documents by the experts from industry and the academia
Pilot Testing of the pre – test, post – test, delayed posttest and the modules.
Implementing the said changes and finalizing the pretest, posttest, delayed posttest and the modules.
Administration of the pretest
Implementation of the intervention
Posttest
Delayed Posttest

Fig 2: Diagrammatic representation of the Experimental Design Procedure

First, the skill sets required by the management postgraduates were understood through the review of past literature, the explanation of which has been given in Chapter 2 of the thesis. Based on the understanding of the skills sets, the pretest, posttest, modules and the delayed posttest were developed. The following paragraphs explain the selection of the sample, the development of the tests and the implementation of the intervention.

8.1.1 Population

All the elements of the field of inquiry constitute the population of the study or the universe. Since the current study aims at evaluating the effectiveness of a soft skill development program on the employable skill sets of postgraduate students in Bengaluru, the population includes all the students of Bengaluru pursuing their Masters of Business Administration. This is the base from which the researcher will choose the sample for the study.

8.1.2 Sampling Unit and Sampling Frame

In the current study each student forms a sampling unit. The sampling frame refers to a list of all the units in a population. However, since this is only possible in a finite population, the researcher prepared a list of colleges and universities to be approached and relied on their student lists to select the sample.

8.1.3 Sampling Technique

Given the large sample size and the difficulty in connecting with all members of the population, the researcher chose to use nonprobability, purposive sampling. In order to be eligible to participate, the individual had to have a basic understanding of the English language. The criteria for inclusion were that the participants must be a management student pursuing their MBA in a college in Bengaluru and must have a basic understanding of the English Language.

8.1.4 Sample Size and Test Details

The study was aimed at developing a learning model for the necessary soft skills based on experiential learning for the management postgraduates. The colleges in Bangalore that were ranked A and A+ by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India were included in the purview of the study. On a random basis, a

management institute and a department of management studies in a technological institution were selected for the study to be implemented.

The second semester students pursuing the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees in the above – mentioned colleges were selected. The main rationale behind selecting this set of students were as described below:

- Placements in colleges start in the 3rd semester of MBA.
- Students have a subject called Employability Skills in the 1st year which is taught using chalk and talk method. My study based on experiential learning method will be able to enhance their understanding of the subject and enable their placements.
- The 4th semester was the project semester and therefore students are coming to the colleges in reduced numbers and the semester duration is also shortened owing to their major project dissertation in the 4th semester.

The department of management studies had a strength of 60 students and institute of management had a strength of 180 students. Based on the study by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007 a sample of minimum 15 participants is essential for an experimental study. Based on the number of students required for the sample, it was decided that the pilot study will be conducted at the department of management studies in the technological instituion and the main intervention will be conducted at the management institute.

The respective Heads of Departments and the Directors of the two institutes were contacted, the modules were shared and the permission was obtained to conduct the study with the students from the start of their respective semesters. The modules, pretest, posttest and the delayed posttest were validated by industry and academic experts from India and abroad. Since the study involved the participation by human subjects, the ethical approval of the Internal Review Board was obtained and the study was exempted from review by the Research Conduct and Ethics Committee of the authors' university. The expert opinion on the modules, pre test, post test and the delayed posttest were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and the value was 0.945.

Further assessment of the expert opinion was conducted using split – half technique where the Part 1 and 2 values came to 0.863 which was above the expected value of 0.7. The Spearman – Brown coefficient (equal length) was 0.953 and the Guttman Spit – Half coefficient was 0.951 which showed a highly significant value of the expert opinion on the modules. The opinion from the 18 participants was also calculated and the Cronbach's Alpha came to highly significant value of 0.978.

All the students were selected to be included in the study as they were all fluent in English language. Those students were excluded whose pretest scores were above the calculated mean. Those students whose pretest scores were below the calculated mean were included as a part of the study and the intervention was implemented on this selected group of students. The details of the pretest, the intervention, the posttest and the delayed posttest have been given below.

The sample selection was made on the basis of the pretest scores that was administered to the students before the intervention. The pre – test involved the administration of the tests that were marked out of 80 to the students, 40 for the written test and 40 for the oral test. The mean marks were calculated and those who scored above the mean were excluded from the excluded and those who scored below the mean were included in the experiment. The tests were divided into two sections – Oral and Written Sections. This was mainly to evaluate the oral and the written abilities of the participants.

The question papers for the pretest, post test and the delayed post test was designed using the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) and Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2000). The students were also evaluated based on the components obtained from the Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1983). Of the various intelligences listed by Gardner, Linguistic, Logico – Mathematical, Spatial and Interpersonal Intelligences have been studied in this study. Various rubrics were also used to grade the students.

The question papers were divided into oral and written sections. Each section was for 40 marks. The written section of the question paper was evaluated using the parameters content, persuasive ability and clarity of critical thought to analyse the linguistic intelligence, logico – mathematical intelligence and spatial intelligence respectively. The oral section of the question was evaluated using the parameters content, persuasive ability, clarity of critical thought and confidence and body language to analyse the linguistic intelligence, logico – mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence and bodily kinesthetic and musical intelligences respectively

Table 2: Table Showing the Scales Used for Developing the Pre test, Post test and Delayed Post test

Portion of the Question Paper	Scales	Developed by	Details
Writing	Testing ESL Composition	Holly L. Jacobs, Stephen A. Zinkgraf, Deanna R. Wormuth, V. Faye Hartfiel, Jane B. Hughey	The rubric system has specified the marks for the papers marked out of 30. Here, the scholar will adapt the rubric for the writing section marked out of 40.
Writing	Writing Assessment Rubric	University of Western Australia	The rubric ranks the students as highly satisfactory, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. This will enable the scholar to understand the progression of the students before and after the intervention.
	BULATS CEFR		The rubric is designed for papers marked on 100. This

Table 2: Table Showing the Scales Used for Developing the Pre test, Post test and Delayed Post test

Portion of the Question Paper	Scales	Developed by	Details
Speaking			will again be adapted to suit the current question paper marked out of 40.

8.2 DETAILS OF THE MODULES

The modules were based on the Multiple Intelligence Theory by Gardner (1983). The skills, the modules and the corresponding intelligences that were aimed to be trained using the modules have been described in the table given below.

Table 3: Table Showing the Modules, Skills and Intelligences developed through the Modules

Module	Number of hours	Skills	Intelligences
I, Me and Myself	6.25 hours	Self Awareness Formal Communication, body language and voice modulation	Intrapersonal and Linguistic Intelligences, Bodily Kinesthetic and Musical Intelligences
The Conceptual Storyteller	12 hours	Critical and lateral thinking, interpersonal communication, social skills, body language and voice modulation	Interpersonal, linguistic intelligence, visual – spatial intelligence and logical mathematical intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic and Musical Intelligences

Table 3: Table Showing the Modules, Skills and Intelligences developed through the Modules

Module	Number of hours	Skills	Intelligences
Writing	5.5 hours	Critical and lateral thinking, interpersonal communication	Interpersonal, linguistic intelligence, visual – spatial intelligence and logical mathematical intellgence.
Presenting Effectively	6 hours	Critical and lateral thinking, interpersonal communication, body language and voice modulation	Interpersonal, linguistic intelligence, visual – spatial intelligence and logical mathematical intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic and Musical Intelligences
Persuasion and Motivation	6.5 hours	Critical and lateral thinking, problem solving, interpersonal communication, body language and voice modulation	Interpersonal, linguistic intelligence, visual – spatial intelligence and logical mathematical intelligence, Bodily Kinesthetic and Musical Intelligences

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical bases for the study have been selected for both the soft skills framework as well as on the experiential learning theories.

For soft skills the Astin framework forms the basis of the selection of the

theoretical framework. Astin (1993) examined the before and the after of the students' development on the basis of 11 selected skills areas. These areas included "general knowledge, knowledge of the discipline, critical thinking, problem solving, writing skills, foreign language skills, public speaking, leadership abilities, interpersonal skills, preparation for professional or graduate school, and job- related skills" (Astin, 1993). The main reason for the choice of this framework for the study is due to the fact that when these skills were compared with the Bloomberg Job Skill Report 2016 (Levy and Cannon, 2016) the skill sets required for graduates to become employable remained the same.

The Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) by David A Kolb (1984) is the other theory which forms the basis of the study. His study has been described as "foundation of much modern experiential education theory" and "foundational text" (Andresen, Boud, & Cohen, 2001). This theory provides various aspects that form the basis for all experiential learning. The theory provided a learning cycle that defines and provides the basis for experiential learning. The four stages according to Kolb that prove the basis for this study as well are:

- Concrete Experience—actually doing the activity
- Reflective Observation—reflecting on performance in the activity, considering failures and successes
- Abstract Conceptualization—apply theory to the experience of doing the activity
- Planning Active Experimentation—consider theory and reflection to guide planning for subsequent experiences

The Multiple Intelligences Theory by Howard Gardner (1983) is another theory which forms the basis of the study. Gardner (!983) in his study on the multiple intelligences devised a list of intelligences of the human mind and attributes certain characteristics and skill sets to human behaviour and performance.

8.3 STATISTICAL DESIGN

In this section, the variables, their operational definitions, measurement and scales, pilot study and tools for analysis will be discussed.

8.3.1 Variables of the study

The variables of the study have been determined based on the guidelines suggested for educational research by Best and Kahn (1995). It is a known fact that variables are the conditions and characteristics that are controlled by and manipulated by the researcher. "A variable is an event, category, behaviour or an attribute that expresses a construct and has different values, depending on how it is used in a particular study" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). Best and Kahn (1995) have described the dependent and independent variables in educational research. Since the study mainly explores the effect of the soft skills development programme on the employable skills of the MBA students, the definitions by Best and Kahn (1995) for independent and dependent variables apply to this study as well.

"A variable affected or expected to be affected by the independent variable is called the dependent variable" (Fraenkal and Wallen, 2006). The dependent variables are in turn the conditions and the characteristics that can be altered with the changes in the independent variables, for example test scores, or the speed of performing a given task. Based on these definitions the following dependent and independent variables have been used in the study. **The dependent variable for the study is Employable Skills and the independent variable is Soft Skills Development Programme.**

8.3.2 Operational definitions

The operational definitions of the variables of the study have been discussed below.

1. **Employable Skills:** The essential skills required for a management graduate to become capable of obtaining employment. Examples: Communication skills, leadership skills, critical thinking, problem solving and professionalism.

2. **Experiential Learning:** A simulative learning experience which includes activities and real situations which supplement the classroom learning.

3. **Soft Skills:** Those skills that are essential for an individual to adapt to the work place environment. These skills include communication skills, leadership skills, team adaptation skills and the like.

4. **Soft Skills Gap:** The difference in the soft skills possessed by the graduates and the required skills needed on the job.

5. **Management Students:** Those students who have are undergoing in regular management programmes in the undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels in Bengaluru.

8.3.3 Tools for Analysis

The analysis of the data was carried out in IBM SPSS. To analyse the differences between pretest – post test, post test – delayed post test and pretest – delayed post test, paired samples t – test was used. The analysis was conducted for the overall marks as well as the oral and written marks obtained by the students. The r – value (effect size) of the experiment was also calculated using the formula:

$$\sqrt{\frac{t^2}{t^2 + df}}$$

The effect size is important to understand the magnitude of the experiment and the results and is essential in reporting the results of experimental studies (Lenth, 2001; Baguley, 2004; Fields, 2009). Cohen (1988, 1992) has provided the constituents of large and small effects. The values provided by Cohen (1988, 1992) are as follows:

- r = 0.1 – small effect
- r = 0.3 – medium effect

- r = 0.5 – large effect

In order to find out the impact of the training modules, the pretest – post test and delayed post test differences were analysed using Repeated Measures ANOVA. The Mauchly's test of Sphericity was applied and the Bonferroni's correction was used in case the sphericity test was not met. The summary of the hypothesis and the analysis has been described below.

The effect size is important to understand the magnitude of the experiment and the results and is essential in reporting the results of experimental studies (Lenth, 2001; Baguley, 2004; Fields, 2009). Cohen (1988, 1992) has provided the constituents of large and small effects. the values provided by Cohen (1988, 1992) are: r = 0.1 – small effect, r = 0.3 – medium effect and r = 0.5 – large effect.

Though the paired t – test provides the results of significance and the non significance of the intervention along with the mean difference, the effect sizes provide further information on the magnitude of the effect as being small, medium or large (Coe, 2002; Strand, 2004; Fields, 2009; Elsayir, 2012; Maher, Markey and May, 2013). Coe (2002) further substantiates that "effect sizes are useful for quantifying the effects of the experiment." This is also substantiated by the American Psychological Association (APA), "Appropriate indexes of effect size or strength of relationship should be incorporated in the results section of the manuscript. Information that allows the reader to assess not only the (statistical) significance, but also the magnitude of the observed effects or relationships, clarifies the importance of the findings." Strand (2004) goes on to further clarify that effect sizes must be calculated on statistically significant results only and that statistical significance must be used as a filter in further calculations of effect sizes.

9 ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data was carried out in SPSS. This section presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 4: Table showing Overall Test Results and Effect Sizes			
Test Details	**p - value**	**Standard Error**	**r value (effect size)**
Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	1.6216	0.898
Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	1.2419	0.691
Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	1.7597	0.931
Oral Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	1.605	0.832
Oral Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.855	0.61
Oral Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	1.665	0.879
Written Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	1.125	0.622
Written Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.836	0.538
Written Pretest - Delayed Post test	<0.0001	1.368	0.722

The above table shows the p – values and the effect sizes of the paired samples t – test that was conducted to find the impact of the modules on the skill development of the students. The analysis indicated that there was a significant impact of the modules on the overall skills including oral and written aspects as the $p<0.05$. The analysis of the effect sizes also revealed that there was a high effect of the modules on the overall, oral aspects and written aspects of the skills of the students. The overall skills also measured the interpersonal and social skills of the participants along with measuring the self-confidence of the participants.

In order to understand the effect of the modules on the component wise development of the skills, a further analysis was done using paired samples t test, the results of which have been explained in Tables 5, 6 and 7 below. Table 5 explains the overall differences in the pre, post and the delayed post tests. Tables 6 and 7 explain the differences in the tests in the oral and the written aspects of the intelligences and the skills.

Intrapersonal	Self Awareness	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	1.020	0.829
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	0.0003	0.426	0.519
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	1.013	0.868

Table 6: Table showing Oral Component Scores and the Effect Sizes

Intelligence Components	Skill Components	Test Details	P – values	Standard Error	Effect Sizes
Linguistic	Formal communication skills	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.470	0.804
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	0.009	0.280	0.389
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.503	0.832
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving Persuasive ability	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.370	0.854
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.244	0.497
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.352	0.904
Spatial	Critical thinking Lateral thinking	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.424	0.802
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.287	0.608
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.428	0.879

Table 7: Table showing Written Component Scores and the Effect Sizes					
Intelligence Components	**Skill Components**	**Test Details**	**P – values**	**Standard Error**	**Effect Sizes**
Linguistic	Formal communication skills	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.765	0.435
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	0.009	0.443	0.311
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.843	0.522
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving Persuasive ability	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.253	0.715
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.274	0.605
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.315	0.829
Spatial	Critical thinking Lateral thinking	Pretest – Post test	<0.0001	0.273	0.697
		Post Test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.268	0.556
		Pretest – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	0.345	0.791

From the analysis for Tables 5, 6 and 7, it can be understood that the participants showed significant improvements in the overall component scores with high effects especially in the pretest – post test and the post test – delayed post test comparisons. The individual analysis of the oral and the written portions of the question paper from Tables 5 and 6, show that the effect of the modules on the oral component skills were higher than in the written component skills in the linguistic ability. This

depicts that the participants had a basic understanding of the English language and the training modules helped them to develop their knowledge further.

Table 8 shows the results of the repeated measures ANOVA test that showed the existence of a significant difference between the pretest, post test and the delayed post test.

Table 8: Table showing Overall Test Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA

Test Details	p - value	Null Hypothesis
Pretest – Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	Rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted
Oral Pretest – Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	Rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted
Written Pretest – Post test – Delayed Post test	<0.0001	Rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted

The analysis of the component scores of the oral and the written skills also show a significant difference between the pre – post and the delayed post tests thus resulting in the rejection of the respective hypotheses.

Table 9: Table showing Gender Wise Component Scores and the Effect Sizes

Intelligence Components	Skill Components	Test Details	P – values	Effect Sizes
Linguistic	Formal communication skills	Pretest	1.439	0.3294
		Post Test	.272	0.0659
		Delayed Post Test	.358	0.0866
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving Persuasive ability	Pretest	.861	0.204
		Post Test	1.073	0.252
		Delayed Post Test	-.826	0.196
Spatial	Critical thinking Lateral thinking	Pretest	.975	0.230
		Post Test	1.030	0.242
		Delayed Post test	-.151	0.037

Table 9: Table showing Gender Wise Component Scores and the Effect Sizes				
Intelligence Components	**Skill Components**	**Test Details**	**P – values**	**Effect Sizes**
Musical and Bodily – Kinesthetic	Appropriate use of gestures, tone and voice	Pretest	1.000	0.236
		Post Test	.101	0.024
		Delayed Post Test	0.000	<0.0001
Intrapersonal	Self Awareness	Pretest	1.362	0.314
		Post Test	.443	0.107
		Delayed Post Test	.993	0.234

Table 10: Table showing Gender Wise Oral Component Scores and the Effect Sizes				
Intelligence Components	**Skill Components**	**Test Details**	**P – values**	**Effect Sizes**
Linguistic	Formal communication skills	Pretest	.161	0.335
		Post Test	1.000	<0.0001
		Delayed Post Test	.076	0.416
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving Persuasive ability	Pretest	.103	0.386
		Post Test	.388	0.210
		Delayed Post Test	.777	0.0695
Spatial	Critical thinking Lateral thinking	Pretest	.237	0.285
		Post Test	.421	0.196
		Delayed Post test	.102	0.387

Table 11: Table showing Gender Wise Written Component Scores and the Effect Sizes				
Intelligence Components	**Skill Components**	**Test Details**	**P – values**	**Effect Sizes**
Linguistic	Formal communication skills	Pretest	.518	0.158
		Post Test	.737	0.0825
		Delayed Post Test	.528	0.154
Logico – Mathematical	Problem solving Persuasive ability	Pretest	.860	0.043
		Post Test	.380	0.214
		Delayed Post Test	.392	0.208
Spatial	Critical thinking Lateral thinking	Pretest	.763	0.0741
		Post Test	.415	0.199
		Delayed Post test	.148	0.345

From the analysis of tables 9, 10 and 11, it can be understood that there is no significant difference between the boys and the girls of the batch and all the students have irrespective of gender, have shown similar levels of performance.

10 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Previous literature has highlighted the need for employable skills to be developed in management students. Various literature has also mentioned the need for an effective training program to develop the skills of the students (Atkins, 1999; March, Peso and Leguey, 2009; Meyers, 2017). Based on the suggestions and recommendations

of the previous literature, the study aimed to understand the impact of a soft skills development programme based on experiential learning pedagogy on the employable soft skills of management students in Bengaluru. To do this, the researcher conducted a one group pretest post test study with self-developed modules that were validated by students and members of the industry and the academia. Students of 2nd semester MBA courses were the participants in the study.

The current study had five objectives. The first objective was to discern the skills that the corporates expect the management post graduates to possess when they look for job opportunities after their graduation. This objective was met using the systematic review of literature. Communication, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, interpersonal skills, self awareness and self confidence, analytical skills, social and political skills and technological skills were some of the common skills that were found to be considered as essential skills by the corporate professionals (Cotton (1993); Andelt, Barrett and Bosshamer (1997); Crosling and Ward (2002); Hodges and Burchell (2003); Jackson (2009); Gandhi (2013); Abas and Imam (2016); Levy and Canon (2016); Srinivasan and Ravikumar (2019)).

The second and third objectives were studied simultaneously. The second objective was to analyse the role of the soft skills development programme on the skill development of the students. The third objective was to analyse the effectiveness of the module in terms of skill development of the participants. From the analysis of the data of pretest, post test and delayed post test, it was found that the programme played a significant role on the skill development of the students. Communication, problem solving, critical thinking, self awareness, self confidence, effective use of body language, tone and the development of interpersonal and social skills were the main skills that were developed through the training programme. This finding was also supported by the findings in the studies conducted by Nealy (2005), Jackson (2013), Patel (2016), Proctor (2016), Meyers (2017) and Wadhwa (2019).

The analysis in this study found that there was a significant role of the modules on the skill development of the participants. The effect on the oral skills of the

participants were measured to be more than the effect on the written skills of the participants. The statistically significant results of the comparison of the post test and the delayed post tests of all the component intelligences and skills show that the modules also had an intrinsic impact on the continuous learning attitude of the participants. This was also considered as an essential skill by Crosling and Ward (2002); Hodges and Burchell (2003); Jackson (2009); Gandhi (2013); Abas and Imam (2016).

The fourth objective of the study was to understand the skills that could be developed through the intervention programme. From the analysis, it was found that formal communication skills like oral communication, meeting participation, written communication could be effectively developed using the modules with a high effect on the skill development. The modules were also found to have a significantly large effect on the problem solving, persuasiveness, critical thinking and lateral thinking skills of the students. In addition to the above, the modules created a deeper understanding of the strengths, capabilities and the weaknesses of the participants and enabled them to communicate the same effectively thus preparing them for interviews and group discussions. The modules additionally enabled the participants to appropriately use gestures, tone and their voice in formal communication in a manner that can enhance the effectiveness of their communication. These skills were also found to be lacking in students according to the studies of Cotton (1993); Andelt, Barrett and Bosshamer (1997); Crosling and Ward (2002); Hodges and Burchell (2003); Jackson (2009); Gandhi (2013); Abas and Imam (2016); Levy and Canon (2016); Srinivasan and Ravikumar (2019).

Similar skill sets were also developed in the study of Patel (2016), who conducted a study on the impact of online training on the employable skill development of first year students in a college in Gujarat, India. Writing and speaking skills were developed and the training program had a significant impact on the analytical ability, persuasiveness and the creativity of the participants. The present study however additionally developed the self awareness (intrapersonal) skills and the effective use of gestures, tone and voice of the participants.

The analysis shows that the intervention had a significant impact on the skill development of the participants. The significant scores also show that the participants not only gained the skills but also developed to maintain them as is indicative from the immediate post test – delayed post test scores. The magnitude of all the comparisons in the overall as well as the component score analysis shows a high effect of the intervention on the skills of the participants. This answers the fifth objective about the magnitude of the effect on the skill development of the participants.

The post test – delayed post test results also display a significantly moderate impact of the intervention. These findings are also supported by findings from Manoli, Papadoupolou, Metallidou (2015), where the study found that the participants sustained the effects of the treatment to their reading skills in the immediate as well as the delayed post test results. Similar findings explaining the positive and long term impact of strategy instruction on the skills of participants have been found in studies conducted by Cohen (1998); Oxford (2011); Plonsky (2011); Alzeer (2015); Kelley, Knowles, Holland and Han (2020). Further analysis of the performance of the students on the basis of gender reveals that, there is no significant difference between the boys and the girls of the batch and all the students have irrespective of gender, have shown similar levels of performance.

11 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study provide empirical evidence supporting the adoption of experiential learning for imparting skill development knowledge to students. The study has practical and theoretical implications. The findings support the propositions of the Theory of Experiential Learning Theory by David Kolb. It has been proposed in this theory that experiential learning truly helps in the effective dissemination of facts and knowledge. This study also supports the theory as it was found that experiential learning methods had a significantly large effect on the skill development of students in multiple intelligences like linguistic intelligence, logico – mathematical intelligence and spatial abilities (critical thinking and lateral thinking) of the participants.

While the theoretical implication of the study is significant, the actual need for the study stemmed from the report by ASSOCHAM (2016) which stated that only 7% of the management graduates are employable. A country with more than 5,500 business schools, producing only 7% of employable candidates is indeed a matter of concern. Keeping this issue as the main focus, this study was conducted to understand the manner in which an experiential learning program could help in the development of employable skills in management graduates. The study has revealed that experiential learning techniques can be effective in training the students on various skills required by the corporate professionals.

A positive and non-judgemental learning environment also contributes to the skill development activities. During the course of the training program, the trainer constantly encouraged and provided real time feedback to the participants about their skills. this helped them correct themselves and improve their skills significantly. This has shown that a non – judgemental and positive environment is essential in imparting skill training using experiential learning methods. A safe environment can support skill development to a great level (Wadhwa, 2019).

The study has implications for the trainers and the soft skill training industry as well. There are a number of programmes on soft skill training methods. But, experiential training methods where the participants are actively involved in the learning process can have a positive impact of the training on their skills. A mixture of classroom training and experiential learning activities can definitely expedite the learning process of the participants irrespective of gender and yield better results of the training programs. The higher the interaction and participation of the candidates in their training, the better will be the results of the training process. Training the students in the real time issues they might face in the organisations can help them improve their real time problem solving skills by increasing their persuasive ability and capability of critical thought and action.

12 LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

The first limitation of the current study includes the use of a single group pretest – post test study design. There is therefore scope for further study when the methodology is taken into consideration. Further studies can be conducted by using the two group pretest post test research design. The researcher can assign the students into groups and accordingly assess their skills. The experimental and the control groups can then be compared and their results can be analysed to understand the effects of the training program on the skills.

The second limitation of the study is that it was limited to Bengaluru alone. Taking the colleges of the other districts and towns in Karnataka would have provided a better perspective to the study. Further researchers can undertake such a comparison to understand the manner in which various modules can effect the skill development in metro, Tier – II and Tier – III cities in the state. A similar study can be extended to other states in the country as well.

The third major limitation of the study is with regards to participation. The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to deal with the spread of the virus, all educational institutions conducted the classes online. The study was therefore conducted online. Coordination and participation encouragement were therefore certain issues that had to be dealt with during the course of the study. Future researchers can conduct studies on the real time impact of experiential learning on the skills of the students especially in offline settings and scenarios.

Lastly, the students were tested through delayed post test with the question papers designed by the researcher owing to the limitation of time. Though industry professionals evaluated the students in this study as well, future researchers can conduct the delayed post test as the final interviews that the students attend for placement in order to analyse the true impact of the modules on the skill development of the students.

13 CONCLUSION

The study evaluates the effectiveness of experiential learning methodology on the employable skill development of the management post graduates in Bengaluru. The study employed the Experiential Learning Theory by David Kolb in order to understand the skills that can be developed using experiential training methods. The course was a semester long course with various modules developed by the researcher and validated by members form the industry and the academia.

The findings of the study regarding the skills that can be developed using experiential learning methods supported the findings of Meyers (2017), Proctor (2016) and Patel (2016). In addition to the above, it was found that the modules also had an impact in creating self – awareness among the students about their strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. In addition to this, the training also made the students aware about the appropriate use of gestures, tone and voice in their communication. The findings of the study have vital implications for the members of the industry as well as the academia. Experiential training methodology is indeed an important pedagogy that trainers and educators must use while imparting knowledge about skills and intelligences.

The study also has implications for the higher education institutions as there is a need for the management institutions to impart training at the college and the university level. Integrating the employable skill training along with the curriculum training is important. There are subjects on management communication and employable skills that are a part of the coursework curriculum of the management graduates. But, the training that is imparted is purely through chalk and talk method. It is essential that this coursework is integrated with classroom activities that can boost the employable skill development of the students.

Real time activities can supplement the coursework training of the students and help them have a better grasp of the skill training. It is therefore recommended to include classroom activities in the coursework syllabus in order to ensure better training

and development of the students and their employable skills. It is also suggested for the colleges and the universities to have an employable skill club with access to the industry trainers and professionals to enable students to voluntarily enrol for their skill development. This will bridge the gap between the industry and the academia thus making it easier to understand the changing trends in the market and adapt to it at the right time. Organisations are constantly looking for well updated candidates who can adapt to the changing needs of the market and the industry. Having such clubs and groups in the higher education institutions can help to bring the industry and the academia closer.

REFERENCES

A Longer Piece on the Taxonomy of Bloom. (2017). Retrieved 8 December 2021, from https://theeconomyofmeaning.com/2017/08/24/a-longer-piece-on-the-taxonomy-of-bloom/

Abas, M. C., & Imam, O. A. (2016). Graduates' competence on Employability Skills and Job Performance. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, *5*(2), 119. https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v5i2.4530

Alzeer, S. N. M. (2015). *Intentional Vocabulary Learning using a Web-based Flashcard System* (thesis). King Saud University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Andelt, L. L., Barrett, L. A., & Bosshamer, B. K. (1997). Employer Assessment Of The Skill Preparation Of Students From The College Of Agricultural Sciences And Natural Resources University Of Nebraska-Lincoln: Implications For Teaching And Curriculum . *NACTA Journal.*

Astin, A. (January 1993). What matters in college? Four critical years revisited. *The Journal of Higher Education.* doi:10.2307/1176821

Atkins, M. J. (1999). Oven-ready and self-basting: Taking stock of employability skills. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *4*(2), 267–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/1356251990040208

B and C category B-schools producing un-employable pass-outs(Rep.). (2017, April 27). Retrieved http://www.assocham.org/newsdetail.php?id=5651

Bakhshi, H., Downing, J., Osborne, M., & Schneider, P. (2017). *The Future of Skills Employment in 2030*. Pearson.

Baguley, T. (2004). Understanding statistical power in the context of applied research. *Applied Ergonomics*, *35*(2), 73-80. doi: 10.1016/j.apergo.2004.01.002

Bennett, J. V. (2007). Work-based learning and social support: Relative influences on high school seniors' occupational engagement orientations. *Career and Technical Education Research,32*(3), 187-214.

Best, J. and Kahn, J., 1995. *Research in Education*. 7th ed. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Bansal, A. (2018). A Study On Employability Skills Of Mba Students: Employers And Students Perspective. *Gurukul Business Review*, *14*, 47–51.

Bok, D. (2008). *Our underachieving colleges: A candid look at how much students learn and why they should be learning more*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Buenviaje, M. G., Encio, H. A., Refozar, R. F., Anuran, A., Camello, N. C., & Laguador, J. M. (2016). Employability and Skills of MBA Graduates fromLiterature Review as Input to Student Development Program. *Journal of Research in Business and Management, 4(5)*, 16–21.

Cappelli, P. (2008). Talent management for the twenty-first century. *Harvard Business Review*

Confederation of British Industry (2007). *Shaping up for the future: The business vision for education and skills.* (Rep.)

Cohen, J. (1988), *Statistical power analysis for the behavioural sciences*, Academic Press, New York, 2nd ed.

Cohen, J. (1992), "A power primer.", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 112 No. 1, pp. 155-159

Cotton, J. L. (1993). *Employee involvement: Methods for improving performance and work attitudes*. Sage Publication.

Crawford, P., Lang, S., Fink, W., Dalton, R., & Fielitz, L. (n.d.). *Comparative Analysis of Soft Skills: What is Important for New Graduates?* (Publication). Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the University Industry Consortium (UIC).

Crosling, G., & Ward, I. (2002). Oral Communication: The workplace needs and uses of Business Graduate Employees. *English for Specific Purposes*, *21*(1), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0889-4906(00)00031-4

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Colliers Books.

Echternacht, L., & Wen, L. (1997). The importance of workplace basics competencies (SCANS) as perceived by beginning business teachers and experienced business teachers. *College Student Journal, 31*(1), 37-44.

Eisner, S. (2010). Grave new world? Workplace skills for today's college graduates. *American Journal of Business Education, 3*(9), 27-50.

Evers, F. T., Rush, J. C., & Berdrow, I. (1998). *The bases of competence: Skills for lifelong learning and employability*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Field, A. (2009), *Discovering statistics using SPSS*, SAGE, London, 3rd ed

Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc.

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A. J., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct its dimensions and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 14-38.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind* (2nd ed.). New York: Basic.

Gandhi, M. (2013). Employability Skills in Management Students- An Industry Perspective. *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, *2*(2), 85–97.

Gentry, J. (1990). What is experiential learning? *Guide to Business Gaming and Experiential Learning,* 9-20.

Gowsalya, G., & Kumar, A. (2016). A Study on Identification of the Employability Skills Level among Arts and Science College Students in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, *5*(9).

Heimler, R. (2010). *Attitudes of college graduates, faculty, and human resource managers regarding the importance of skills acquired in college and needed for job performance and career advancement potential in the retail sector* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Dowling College, Oakdale, NY.

Hernández-March, J., Martín del Peso, M., & Leguey, S. (2009). Graduates' skills and Higher Education: The employers' perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *15*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583880802699978

Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis* (Rep.). Department for Education and Employment.

Hodges, D., & Burchell, N. (2003). Business Graduate Competencies: Employers' Views on Importance and Performance . *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* , *4*(2).

Hoover, J. D., Giambatista, R. C., & Belkin, L. Y. (2012). Eyes on, hands on: Vicarious observational learning as an enhancement of direct experience. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *11*(4), 591–608. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0102

Hunt, E. (1995). *Will we be smart enough?: A cognitive analysis of the coming workforce*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

ILO. (n.d.). (rep.).

Jackson, D. (2009). An international profile of industry-relevant competencies and skill gaps in modern graduates. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *8*(3), 29–58. https://doi.org/10.3794/ijme.83.288

Jackson, D., & Chapman, E. (2012). Non-technical competencies in undergraduate business degree programs: Australian and UK perspectives. *Studies in Higher Education, 37*(5), 541-567. doi:10.1080/03075079.2010.527935

Kelley, T. R., Knowles, J. G., Holland, J. D., & Han, J. (2020). Increasing high school teachers self-efficacy for integrated STEM instruction through a collaborative community of Practice. *International Journal of STEM Education, 7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-00211-w

Khare, M. (2016). Higher Education–University: Taking the Skills March Forward in India- Transitioning to the World of Work. In *India: Preparation for the World of Work* (pp. 103-139). Wiesbaden Springer VS.

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 4*(2), 193-212. doi:10.5465/amle.2005.17268566

Levy, F., & Cannon, C. (2016, February 9). *The Bloomberg Job Skills Report 2016: What Recruiters Want*(Rep.).

Lenth, R. (2001), "Some Practical Guidelines for Effective Sample Size Determination", *The American Statistician*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 187-193.

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D., & Lewin, J. (2011). *Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates. Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates*. Edge Foundation.

Manoli, P., Papadopoulou, M., & Metallidou, P. (2015). Investigating the immediate and delayed effects of multiple-reading strategy instruction in primary EFL classrooms. *System, 56*, 54–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.11.003

McMillan, J. and Schumacher, S., 1989. *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper Collins.

Meyers, B. (2017). *The development of employability skills through an experiential learning approach* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Union University.

Moin, R., & Biswal, S. (2012). Soft skills in status quo. *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences, 2*(5), 212-223.

Nealy, C. (2005). Integrating Soft Skills Through Active Learning In The Management Classroom. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC), 2*(4). doi:10.19030/tlc.v2i4.1805

Oxford, R. L. (2011). Strategies for learning a second or foreign language. *Language Teaching, 44*(2), 167–180. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444810000492

Packianathan, S., & Narayanan, R. (2014). Employability Skills: A Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Management , 5*(7), 73–80.

Patel, T. (2016). *Effectiveness Of Incorporating Internet And Computer-Based Tasks To Develop Writing And Speaking Skills Of Mba Students* (thesis). The Maharaja Sayajirao University Of Baroda, Vadodara, Vadodara.

Plonsky, L. (2011). The effectiveness of Second language strategy instruction: A meta-analysis. *Language Learning, 61*(4), 993–1038. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00663.x

Proctor, D. L., Dr,. (2016). *Games and Simulations in Soft Skills Training.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Graduate School, Morehead State University.

Raj, R. (2008). Business negotiations: A "soft" perspective. *ICFA Journal of Soft Skills, 2*(1), 7-22.

Ravan, S. (2016). Employability Skills Need Of An Hour For Mba Students. *EPRA International Journal Of Economic And Business Review, 4*(10).

Reddan, G. (2008). The benefits of job-search seminars and mock interviews. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 9*(2), 113-127.

Romaniuk, K., & Snart, F. (2000). Enhancing employability: The role of prior learning assessment and portfolios. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 12*(1), 29-34. doi:10.1108/13665620010309774

Rothwell, A., & Arnold, J. (2007). Self-perceived employability: Development and validation of a scale. *Personnel Review*, *36*(1), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480710716704

Soft skills for hard times. (2004, Fall). *Leader to Leader*, 2004(34), 59.

Spence, K. K., & Mcdonald, M. A. (2015). Assessing Vertical Development in Experiential Learning Curriculum. *Journal of Experiential Education,38*(3), 296-312. doi:10.1177/1053825915571749

Srinivasan, S., & Ravikumar, T. (2019). In *8th International HR*. Mysore, Karnataka; 8th International HR Conference.

Stewart, J., & Knowles, V. (2002). Graduate recruitment: Implications for business and management courses in HE. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 25*(2/3/4), 98-108. doi:10.1108/03090590110395771

Stokes, C. L. (2013). *A Case Study Understanding Employability Through the Lens of Human Resource Executives* (thesis).

Vadhana, C., & Zakkariya, K. (2012). Does "soft skills" matter for Indian b- schools? A content analysis of the advertisements of Indian b-schools to identify the major focus areas, with specific reference to soft skills assessment and development. *And Development. International Journal of Business and Management Tomorrow,2*(10), 1-11.

Wadhwa, S. (2019). *An Action Research to Enhance Employability Skills of the Engineering Graduates by student-centred activity based learning framework* (thesis). C U SHah University, Gujarat.

Watts, A. G. (2006). (rep.). *Career development learning and employability* (Ser. 2, pp. 1–36). York, United Kingdom: The Higher Education Academy.

Wheebox. (2022). *India Skills Report 2022*.

World Economic Forum. (2020). *Future of Jobs Report 2020*. Switzerland: World Economic Forum.

715131

ORIGINAL

Connecting People with Nature

INDIAN JOURNAL OF NATURAL SCIENCES

(ISSN: 0976-0997, Print (Bimonthly), MJL Clarivate Analytics (Thomson Reuters, USA)
C/o TNSRO,#39,Mura Bhavan ,Koodal Nagar ,Rajagopalapuram post ,
Pudukkottai-622003, T.N, India. 04322-261088 , 99528 86637, www.tnsroindia.org.in
E-Mail: ijons@tnsroindia.org.in (For publication), ijonstnsro@gmail.com(For general inquiry)

Ref: IJONS/PUB-71/VOL-13/APR/091/2022 **DT: 24.03.2022**

To

Shruti Srinivasan[1] and **Ravikumar. T**[2]*
[1]Doctoral Scholar, School of Business and Management, CHRIST (Deemed University), Bangalore, Karnataka, India.
[2]Associate Professor, School of Business and Management, CHRIST (Deemed University), Bangalore, Karnataka, India.
***Corresponding author**

Dear Sir/Madam

Sub: Acceptance Letter to Author(s)*

Congratulation!!! According to my record, your manuscript entitled **"Corporate Storytelling: Formal Application of Stories in Indian Organizations"** has been accepted for publication in the Indian Journal of Natural Sciences **(IJONS) VOL- 13 / ISSUE 71 / APRIL 2022.** Furthermore, you are responsible for any error in the published paper due to your oversight. Thank you very much for submitting your article to the Indian Journal of Natural Sciences (IJONS).

Naturally Yours

S.Vijikumar 24/3/2022

Editor - in - Chief,
Indian Journal of Natural Sciences
C/o. TNSRO
39, Mura Bhawan, Koodal Nagar,
Rajagopalapuram (Post),
Pudukkottai - 622 003.
Tamil Nadu, India.

INDIAN JOURNAL OF NATURAL SCIENCES * PUDUKKOTTAI * ISSN: 0976-0997 Date: 24/3/2022

Publication Officer.
Indian Journal of Natural Sciences

*This letter is valid only for this mentioned publication. We would like to inform you that no change can be made in this letter after it has been issued.

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at:
https://www.emerald.com/insight/2042-3896.htm

Essential employable skill sets in management graduates for finance job roles in India

Shruti Srinivasan and Ravikumar Thangaraj
Department of Management Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India

Received 10 May 2020
Revised 7 December 2020
17 February 2021
Accepted 1 April 2021

Abstract

Purpose – There has been an increase in the number of highly qualified management graduates specialized in finance from various esteemed universities in India, thus increasing the competition for finance job roles in the country. This, therefore, brings in the need for the employees or the prospective candidates to mold their soft skills so as to make them desirable by the companies and hence employable. The purpose of this paper is to provide a list of skills required by management graduates to become employable for finance job roles from the perspective of corporate executives. This list will enable prospective candidates to prepare themselves for a career in the field of finance.

Design/methodology/approach – The research was carried out through the collection of data from 117 finance professionals with a minimum work experience of 5 years with the help of structured questionnaires. This was then analyzed through factor analysis and the list of 15 factors was obtained.

Findings – A list of 15 essential factors was obtained through the analysis of the data. The essential skills included empathetic and judicious behavior, professional etiquette and employee well-being, ethical behavior, conflict management, change analysis and prediction; practicality and organizational presence of mind; social and moral presence of mind; self-confidence and effective written communication; effective interpersonal communication and employee value systems; responsibility and self-awareness; problem diagnosis and problem-solving; real-time work and activity experience; professional development and advancement; technology rationalization and effective information generation. The findings also included that a candidate should be able to effectively present crucial information and should possess practical advisory skills.

Originality/value – The study will be highly beneficial for management graduates who have specialized in finance to secure finance job roles in India. This paper will enable the students to prepare themselves in the essential soft skills required for these job roles apart from technical knowledge and hard skills.

Keywords Employable skill set, Management discipline, Finance job roles

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The job market today has become highly competitive. With the increase in technology and the availability of information at the tip of one's fingers, the expectations of the employers while hiring the candidates has increased manifold. This, therefore, brings in the need for the employees or the prospective candidates to mold their skills so as to make them desirable by the companies and hence employable.

Employability refers to the ability that an individual has to be recruited by an organization. Several reports including the recent reports by the World Economic Forum (2016) and Bloomberg (Levy and Cannon, 2016), the skills have been highlighted as requirements for various industries. According to the report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry in India (ASSOCHAM, 2017), the employability percentage of the students graduating from the 5,500 business colleges in India is merely 7%.

In order to become employable, it is but imperative for the students of today to learn the essential skills that will enable them to adapt to the workplace environment and keep up with the workplace demands (Echternacht and Wen, 1997). Earlier, especially prior to the Industrial Revolution a quality worker was noted by his ability to perform complex physical tasks. But, today an employee needs much more than physical strength to survive in the

Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning
Vol. 11 No. 5, 2021
pp. 1224-1235
© Emerald Publishing Limited
2042-3896
DOI 10.1108/HESWBL-05-2020-0093

workplace. Several skills have been identified over time and these skills have not changed in their nature and need for the industries. Communication, problem-solving skills and strategic thinking are some of these skills (Astin, 1993; Levy and Cannon, 2016). Earlier, the term *skill* was mainly used to address any kind of manual operation. But today the term is used to mean any kind of practice, a form of knowledge or productive labor (Urciuoli, 2008). The skills are definitely lacking in the graduates in India too (Bano and Vasantha, 2019; Singh and Kumar, 2018).

While the possession of the above-mentioned skills like communication and problem-solving hold true for management graduates in general, the graduates with a specialization in finance increasingly require the possession of certain skill sets. Various academic literatures has emphasized the importance of employable skill sets that have to be possessed by candidates who are seeking job opportunities in domains such as accounting, financial planning and the like. Theoretical knowledge alone does not guarantee job placement in finance job roles. It is the possession of skills like problem-solving, analytical and critical thinking, communication and the like that the employers in the recent past have focused upon (Albrecht and Sack, 2000; Jackling and De Lange, 2009; Teale, 2013; Yee *et al*, 2014; Su and Zhang, 2015; Tan and Fawzi, 2017; Atanasovski *et al*., 2018). The above-mentioned academic publications have delved into the importance and development of managerial skills in India and financial skills outside India. This paper, therefore, aims to understand the skills that are required to be possessed by management graduates to secure a finance job in India.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Employability and employable skills for management graduates

According to the Confederation of British Industry "employability is the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realize his or her aspirations and potential in work" (CBI, 2007). Employability skills are essential for an employee's survival in a work setting and environment. These skills can be taught in the educational as well as in the organizational environment.

According to the Collins English Dictionary, " a graduate student is a student with a first degree from a university who is studying or doing research at a more advanced level." A graduate degree is a degree that is obtained after the completion of a first degree or a bachelor's degree (Difference Between Undergraduate, Graduate and Postgraduate | ScholarshipOwl, 2020). First degree graduates are also called undergraduates and higher degree graduates are also called postgraduates (Pollard *et al*., 2015). A study by Abel *et al*. (2014) analyses the extent to which the labor market has become difficult for new graduates. In this study, the term "graduates" has been defined as college students who possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree. For this study, the term (management graduates) is meant to include all those students who possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree and are currently pursuing a postgraduate degree in management which in this case is the master of business administration (MBA) degree.

Soft skills especially communication skills have the most impact on the employability of graduates in every industry (Levy and Cannon, 2016). In addition to communication skills, teamwork, initiative and moral quality are some of the skills that employers look for in candidates today (Su and Zhang, 2015). Soft skills are extremely important for those graduates entering the corporate and business world who have the ambition to become the global leaders of tomorrow. While technical skills are essential for the graduates to possess, soft skills too play an important role in their employability in the organizations. Soft skills assist in building employee rapport and thus the overall environment in an organization (Soft Skills for Hard Times, 2004). There is an employable skills gap amongst the management

graduates in India and there is a need to enhance the same (Dhanawade and Bhola, 2012; Singh and Kumar, 2018; Santhi, 2018; Bano and Vasantha, 2019). Dhar (2012) has emphasized the importance of management institutions to develop the skills of the graduates in India so as to bridge the gap between the employable skills possessed by graduates and the corporate requirements.

2.2 Employable skills required for finance job roles

The business environment today requires the candidates graduating from various educational institutions with management degrees to possess a certain set of skills that will make the candidates stand out from the rest. The same stands true for the graduates with finance specialization looking for finance-related job roles. As early as 1998, the American Institute of Certified Public Accounts (CPAs) listed communication, strategic thinking and planning, leadership skills and client focus as the main skills required for accountants and finance specialists. There is now an increased reliance of the finance professionals on information technology thus leading to an increase in the need for technological knowledge, negotiation and communication skills, analytical reasoning and the like (Atanasovski *et al.*, 2018). Wells *et al.* (2009) conducted a study in New Zealand to understand the skills required by the professional practitioners in finance and arrived at a list of 40 skills that were deemed necessary for the practitioners. The 40 skills were then categorized as "personal, interpersonal and intellectual capabilities, profession-specific skills and knowledge and generic skills."

Teale (2013) also emphasizes that employers of financial planning organizations are not looking for theoretical knowledge alone, but are looking for the candidates to apply the theoretical knowledge to practical situations and work scenarios. Work experience and extracurricular activities are important for the candidate to gain experience as the development of the candidate is a cumulative effect of university education and practical experience (Rae, 2007). Financial planning like accounting requires a huge array of skills like communication, negotiation, analysis and synthesis of information, ability to apply the theoretical knowledge to practical settings, motivational and leadership qualities, and most importantly ethics and professionalism are the qualities that the employers are looking for in the prospective finance professionals (DEST, 2004; Goetz *et al.*, 2005; Financial Planning Standards Board, 2007; Kavanagh and Drennan, 2008). The results of the study conducted by Jackling and De Lange (2009) ranked the generic skills required by accounting graduates as higher than the technical skills. The study enumerated teamwork, leadership and verbal communication as the most important generic skills and key accounting skills and accounting problem analysis as the required technical skills. Similar results were also found in the study conducted by Atanasovski *et al.* (2018) where both employers and the students ranked generic skills higher than technical skills as financial pre-requisites. While the students considered time management, self-confidence and motivation as the important generic skills, employers ranked communication, ethics, credibility and commitment to lifelong learning as the important generic skills.

The study by Yee *et al.* (2014) featured four geographical areas–Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Japan. The results of the study exhibited that finance and accounting employers in Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong sought good information and technology (IT) skills while China sought business skills (analytical skills, negotiation skills, strategic planning and investor relations) as the most important followed by IT skills. The book "From ledgers to leadership: A Journey through the finance Function" by CGMA (2012) has listed business competencies (change management, risk management, problem-solving skills, communication skills, etc.) as the most important skills required to be possessed by finance professionals followed by technical competencies (accounting and IT skills) in order to

succeed as a finance professional. The study also emphasizes that different skills are required for different levels of seniority, different organization sizes and different finance roles. The common skills, though, remain the same.

3. Research gap

From the above review of past literature, the following research gaps have been found:

(1) Majority of the studies enumerating the skills required by finance professionals to secure finance job roles have been conducted in countries outside India. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the skill sets required by finance professionals to secure finance job roles in India.

(2) Majority of the studies have studied the skill sets required by finance professionals who have accounting degrees or financial certifications and not MBA graduates. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the employable skills that employers seek in management graduates with an MBA degree for finance job roles in the organizations.

(3) Majority of the studies done in India have looked at the generic skill set requirements of the corporate while hiring MBA graduates without specifically looking at the subdomains. This study aims to fill this gap by looking at one particular specialized domain–finance and the skill set requirements thereafter.

4. Research objectives

The objectives of the study are:

(1) To understand the skill sets that have to be possessed by the management graduates specialized in finance from the corporate point of view.

(2) To analyze and categorize the skill sets from a range of statements as indicated by finance professionals with a minimum experience of 5 years.

(3) To define the categories of skill sets and obtain a list of skill sets that are required to be possessed by management graduates in India to secure a finance job role in India.

5. Research methodology

5.1 Sample size

Since this research paper is focused on management graduates and their skill requirements for finance-related job roles, finance professionals in the management discipline with industry experience of a minimum of five years were included in the study. According to a study done by the investment firm CLSA and published by Times of India in 2019, the approximate number of finance professionals is 1.5 m. The sample size calculated at a 95% confidence interval with a 10% margin of error for the given population is 96.

5.2 Data collection

In order to understand the above-mentioned objectives, a questionnaire was distributed to the finance professionals with a minimum work experience of five years in the field of management. The questionnaire was validated by two industry experts and one academic expert. The suggested changes were incorporated. The reliability test was conducted, and the Cronbach's alpha for the reliability analysis of the 50 items in the questionnaire was 0.937.

The Astin framework forms the basis of the selection of the theoretical framework. Astin (1993) examined the before and the after of the students' development based on 11 selected skill areas. These areas included "general knowledge, knowledge of the discipline, critical thinking, problem-solving, writing skills, foreign-language skills, public speaking, leadership abilities, interpersonal skills, preparation for professional or graduate school, and job- related skills" (Astin, 1993). The main reason for the choice of this framework for the study is because when these skills were compared with the Bloomberg Job Skill Report 2016 (Levy and Cannon, 2016), the skill sets required for graduates to become employable remained the same.

The statements were then put in the form of a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted and 15 factors were extracted. These factors were then named and the list of factors that hold predominance in the Indian scenario was obtained and named.

6. Data analysis and discussion

Table 1 shows the distribution of the corporate details of the respondents.

Table 1 depicts the number of years and the domain of corporate experience of the respondents. From the above table, it can be analyzed that majority of the respondents (69.2%) had above 15 years of corporate experience; 17.9% of the respondents had 5–10 years of experience and 12.8% of the respondents had 10–15 years of experience.

Table 1 also shows that the respondents who were listed under the domain of experience as other (like entrepreneurs, education personnel, media personnel, etc.) constituted 37.6%. This was followed by respondents working in financial services and IT and related services, the frequency being 20.5% each. The respondents belonging to construction and property services, manufacturing, healthcare and FMCG (FMCG stands for fast-moving consumer goods). This study also includes those professionals who work in the companies selling non-durable products such as (packaged foods, toiletries, beverages, etc.) constituted 7.7%, 6%, 4.3% and 3.4%, respectively.

Table 2 shows the list of factors that were extracted through the exploratory factor analysis and the respective loadings. In total, 15 factors were extracted during the process. These factors are the essential skills required by management graduates looking for finance job roles. For the study, factors with items having a minimum loading of 0.4 have been included and those having a loading of lesser than 0.32 have been excluded (Field, 2013; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014; Samuels, 2016).

Table 3 displays the summary of the skills sets and the interpretation of the same. The table below elaborates on the skill sets, the components, the most significant component for the skill set and the reason for the same.

Characteristics		Percentages of respondents
Years of corporate experience	5–10 years	17.9
	10–15 years	12.8
	Above 15 years	69.2
Domain of experience	Manufacturing	6.0
	FMCG	3.4
	Construction and property services	7.7
	Financial services	20.5
	IT and related services	20.5
	Healthcare	4.3
	Other	37.6

Table 1.
Table showing the corporate details of the respondents

Factors	Item description/Components of the factors	Loadings
Empathetic and judicious behavior	Coach and help others to learn and adapt in the workplace	0.820
	Effectively motivate, support and develop others to manage and boost their performances	0.779
	Ability to understand sensitive situations and effectively communicate in stressful situations and provide his/her viewpoints in a sensitive manner	0.687
	Ability to effectively manage projects, allocate and utilize the resources judiciously to gain maximum results	0.581
	Ability to create and develop solutions for a variety of problems through lateral and creative thinking	0.540
	Ability to effectively address and judiciously resolve contentious issues of the various stakeholders	0.455
Professional etiquette and employee well-being	The candidate should understand the importance of well-being and perform activities to ensure a healthy and balanced self	0.743
	The candidate should maintain a positive and encouraging attitude when working in a team	0.594
	The candidate should respect and acknowledge contributions from peers, subordinates, and seniors	0.543
	The candidate should take initiative to address and complete tasks and issues	0.527
	The candidate should maintain professional etiquette and dress code in all organizational situations	0.507
Ethical behavior	Ability to listen to and incorporate suggestions, advice, and constructive criticism in the professional space (Understanding everyone's autonomy in the organization)	0.733
	Ability to with multiple approaches to a problem even if it involves the learning of a new approach to the problem (Do what is right and good)	0.726
	The candidate should be trustworthy if he/she has access to sensitive organization information (Trustworthiness)	0.615
Conflict management, change analysis and prediction	Should have the ability to analyze the political and economic changes and foresee how these changes will affect the organization	0.713
	Ability to evaluate, analyze and retain key points in a range of documents and scenarios	0.533
	Should take initiative and lead the change as required in the organizational context	0.514
	Should be open to accepting change in an organization	0.486
	Should have the ability to deal with conflict in a calm and composed manner	0.390
Practicality and organizational presence of mind	Ability to apply academic knowledge to various organizational situations	0.772
	Ability to speak publicly and adjust their speaking style according to the nature of the audience being addressed	0.511
	The candidate should deal effectively with ambiguous situations and work to obtain clarity on them	0.477
	The candidate should be able to effectively persuade and communicate to others about the validity of one's point of view	0.433
Social and moral presence of mind	Ability to communicate his/her thoughts on various matters on social media	0.840
	Should possess prior knowledge of the company that he/she is applying to and understand the structure and company culture to a certain extent beforehand	0.567
	Ability to give and receive effective constructive feedback	0.430
	Ability to effectively provide his/her input, support, participation, cooperation, and assistance in group climates	0.402

(*continued*)

Table 2.
Table showing the factors and their respective loadings

Factors	Item description/Components of the factors	Loadings
Self-confidence and effective written communication	The candidate should be able to effectively communicate in the written language	0.737
	The candidate should be able to work effectively with other employees who belong to diverse cultural and native backgrounds	0.697
	The candidates should be able to effectively communicate in the spoken and the written word about the points evaluated and analyzed from the documents	0.530
	The candidate should possess a certain degree of self – confidence in the face of stressful situations	0.462
Effective interpersonal communication and employee value systems	The candidates should be able to communicate clearly and effectively as appropriate to different audiences and seniority levels	0.675
	The candidates should be able to communicate effectively in team meetings and group events	0.512
	The candidate should display moral and social ethically responsible behavior	0.492
	The candidate should possess core values and beliefs such as honesty and integrity	0.489
Responsibility and self awareness	Ability to take unprompted action in achieving the goals as agreed upon	0.817
	Should accept responsibility for his/her decisions, actions, and work outcomes, be it positive or negative	0.448
	The candidate should know when to lead or when to follow in a team	0.406
Problem diagnosis and problem solving	Ability to analyze facts and circumstances, ask the right questions and effectively diagnose the problems	0.747
	Ability to work effectively in collaborative situations by effectively and actively participating in discussions and solution generating scenarios	0.434
Real-time work and activity experience	Should possess related work or internship experiences	0.786
	Should have been part of a college event or club in the leadership role and should have led a certain number of people in a team	0.626
Professional development and advancement	Should engage in frequent knowledge acquisition for professional development and should share the knowledge with the team members to enable the team and organizational growth	0.788
	Should be able to complete the prescribed tasks and goals even in the absence of supervision	0.502
Technology rationalization and effective information generation	The candidate should possess a basic knowledge about the technological and web-based applications that are relevant to his/her domain	0.739
	The candidate should effectively analyze the provided data and convert it into relevant information that can be utilized for decision-making in the organization	0.477
Practical advisory skills	The candidate should be able to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in the academic program, analyze the facts and deduce appropriate and well-reasoned conclusions to the problems	0.664
	The candidates should be able to recognize patterns in detailed documents and scenarios to understand the "larger" scenario	0.460
Effective presentation of information	The candidate should be able to retrieve, interpret, evaluate and interactively use the information obtained in a range of different formats	0.747

Table 2.

Sl. No.	Skillsets	Interpretation
1	Empathetic and judicious behavior	Empathy refers to the capacity of an individual to share and understand the feeling or the "emotion" of another individual. In an organization, an employee will come across various instances where he/she must display empathy. The results of this study also depict that a prospective candidate should be able to coach and help others in the workplace, should be able to understand and communicate in sensitive situations, should be able to motivate and help their colleagues efficiently, and should be able to create solutions for problems using creative thinking processes (explained by factor loadings of 0.820, 0. 779, 0.687 and 0.540). This skill set also includes the importance of judicious approaches while allocating resources (as depicted by factor loadings of 0. 581 and 0.455, respectively). Understanding the emotions of the various stakeholders in the organization along with the judicious allocation of resources form important skill sets to be possessed by prospective candidates applying for financial job roles
2	Professional etiquette and employee well-being	Moore (1998) refers to business etiquette as the set of rules and regulations, forms and manners that allow for professional communication and respectful conduct within an organization. The above analysis in Table 2 has shown that with professional etiquette the prospective candidate should be able to maintain a positive attitude in a team (factor loading 0.594). Maintaining the guidelines of professional etiquette the candidate is also required to respect and acknowledge the contributions from peers, seniors and subordinates (factor loading 0.543), he/she should take initiative in the organization (factor loading 0.527) and should maintain a professional dress code as required for by the organization (factor loading 0.507) Employee health and well-being have been the prime focus of academic researchers as well since 1978 (Cooper and Marshall, 1978). Health and well-being of the candidate is also a factor to be considered while hiring a candidate for the finance job role. This includes the physical and mental health and well-being of the candidate (as explained by the factor loading of a high factor loading of 0.743)
3	Ethical behavior	There are four recognized categories of ethical behavior: Beneficence (do what is right and good); do the least harm possible; respect all people's autonomy; be just (Chinn, 2019). The analysis in Table 2 has resulted in the following ethical behavior that must be adhered to by the candidates (1) Ability to listen to and incorporate suggestions, advice and constructive criticism in the professional space (understanding everyone's autonomy in the organization, explained with a factor loading of 0.733) (2) Ability to with multiple approaches to a problem even if it involves the learning of a new approach to the problem (do what is right and good, elaborated with a factor loading of 0.726) (3) The candidate should be trustworthy if he/she has access to sensitive organization information (be just and do the least harm possible by being trustworthy, factor loading 0.615)
4	Conflict management, change analysis and prediction	Accepting and managing unpredictable situations in the company arising from changes in the political and economic scenarios as well as within the organization while analyzing the documents and retaining key points along with the candidate's ability to lead such change has been seen as an advantageous skill set that can be possessed by the candidates looking for a finance job role (as illustrated by factor loadings of 0.713, 0.533, 0.514, 0.486, respectively). Though conflict management has a factor loading of 0.390, it has been included here as it is above the excluded point of 0.32 and is closer to 0.4

(*continued*)

Table 3.
Table showing the skill sets and the interpretation

Sl. No.	Skillsets	Interpretation
5	Practicality and organizational presence of mind	This skill set requires the candidate to understand and apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations within the organization along with trying to understand ambiguous situations and obtain clarity by applying his/her presence of mind (factor loadings 0.772 and 0. 477, respectively). The candidate should also communicate effectively to convince the stakeholders in formal settings about his/her point of view while adjusting their speaking style according to the nature of the audience that he/she is addressing within the organization thus displaying practicality and tact (as elaborated in Table 2 with factor loadings of 0.511 and 0.433, respectively)
6	Social and moral presence of mind	The previous skill set requires the presence of mind in organizational settings. This skill set requires the prospective candidate to have the presence of mind in social situations outside the organization too. This includes the presence of mind while posting on social media, knowledge about the organization for conversations in informal situations, presence of mind while giving as well as receiving feedback and displaying tact while communicating in informal group climates (explained by factor loadings of 0.840, 0.567, 0.430, 0.402, respectively)
7	Self-confidence and effective written communication	This skill set requires the candidate to display self-confidence while interacting with people from various cultural backgrounds as every company today is a global corporation (factor loading 0.697). This skillset also requires the candidate to possess self-confidence in the face of stressful situations (loading of 0.462). in addition to the above, the candidate is expected to communicate effectively in written communication regarding the various points that have been evaluated through the analysis of multiple documents (factor loading of 0.737 and 0.530, respectively)
8	Effective interpersonal communication and employee value systems	In the light of this skill set, the candidate is expected to effectively communicate in team meetings with colleagues of various backgrounds and seniority levels (factor loadings of 0.675 and 0.512 respectively). Here, the candidate is also expected to be ethically responsible in his/her conduct while displaying essential values such as honesty and integrity (factor loadings of 0.492 and 0.489, respectively)
9	Responsibility and self-awareness	The candidate should be aware of his/her actions and their implications on the organization. This can be displayed through the unprompted action that he/she takes to achieve the goals, the acceptance of responsibility of one's actions irrespective of the outcomes, and the knowledge as to when to lead and when to follow in a team setting. These are explained through (factor loadings of 0.814, 0.448 and 0.406, respectively)
10	Problem diagnosis and problem-solving	The candidate should have the ability to effectively diagnose the problems in an organization and provide effective solutions even in collaborative situations. This is depicted in the factor loadings of 0.747 and 0.434, respectively
11	Real-time work and activity experience	The candidate's prior work and internship experience is an important skill set that the employers of finance job roles seriously consider (factor loading 0.786). The employers of these roles also seriously consider the candidate who has participated in college events or have held leadership roles in these events or in college clubs (factor loading 0.626)
12	Professional development and advancement	The financial domain has been evolving and continues to evolve in the present times (Saito *et al.*, 2013). In light of this statement, this skill set is of particular importance as the employers expect the candidates to constantly develop and update themselves by gaining knowledge through new professional courses (factor loading 0.788). This also involves the willingness to share such knowledge with the team and other members of the organization. This skill set also requires the candidate to professionally develop oneself by completing the tasks and targets in the organization even in the absence of supervision (factor loading 0.502)

Table 3. *(continued)*

Sl. No.	Skillsets	Interpretation
13	Technology rationalization and effective information generation	It is common knowledge that this is an age of fast technological development. This holds true for the financial domain as well. This skill set requires the candidate to have a willingness to constantly acquaint and upgrade himself/herself with the various technological advancements in the field of finance and in the applications relevant to the domain (loading of 0.739). This also requires the candidate to be capable of analyzing the documents for effective decision-making in the organization (factor loading of 0.477)
14	Practical advisory skills	The candidate should be able to apply the academic knowledge to various problems in the organization and provide effective advice as solution options (factor loading 0.664). This also includes the requirement that the candidate should be able to recognize the problem patterns from various documents and provide advice to the relevant decision-making authorities in the organization (factor loading 0.460)
15	Effective presentation of information	This skill set explains that the candidate should not only be able to generate effective information from the various relevant documents. This skill set also requires the candidate to be able to effectively present the information in a wide range of presentation formats like PowerPoint presentations, poster presentations, whiteboard presentations, presentations involving storytelling and the like (factor loading 0.747)

Table 3.

7. Conclusion

The study lists out the factors that are essential for management graduates to gain employment in suitable finance job roles in India. With the onset of technology, students can access information in real-time in the present era. But, this does not eliminate the need for essential soft skills for them to be absorbed and recruited by the corporate. A list of 15 essential factors was obtained through the analysis of the data that was provided by 117 executives who belonged to the field of finance with a minimum work experience of 5 years. From the analysis, the essential skills that were obtained included empathetic and judicious behavior, effective communication (both written and interpersonal), ethics and strong value system, ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, practical and collaborative problem-solving, efficient document analysis for information generation and effective presentation of information in a wide range of formats. The findings also included that a candidate should be technologically sound, able to handle conflicts effectively, and manage and lead change in an organization along with having the presence of mind both within and outside organizational situations. The management graduates should, therefore, work on obtaining and sharpening these skills. This will definitely have an impact on the employability of the candidates for finance job roles in India.

8. Limitations of the study and scope for further study

The study has provided a list of skills using exploratory factor analysis. There is a need, therefore, to analyze the impact of these skills on the employability of management graduates for finance job roles. Therefore, this provides scope for further research as this study mainly focuses on providing a list of the skill sets.

The study has been limited to India. The scope can be further widened by looking at other countries and the skills required for graduates to obtain job roles in those countries.

This study looks at the employability of management graduates for finance job roles in general. This thus provides scope for future researchers to do specific studies in various subcategories in the field of finance to understand the skill sets required for specific domains.

This study has focused on finance job roles. The scope can be further applied to various other domains in the field of management.

References

Abel, J., Deitz, R. and Su, Y. (2014), "Are recent college graduates finding good jobs?", *Current Issues in Economics and Finance*, Vol. 20 No. 1.

Albrecht, S. and Sack, R. (2000), "Accounting education: changing the course through a perilous future", *Accounting Education Series: Management Accounting Quarterly* (accessed 16 April 2021).

Astin, A. (1993), "What matters in college? Four critical years revisited", *The Journal of Higher Education*. doi: 10.2307/1176821.

Atanasovski, A., Trpeska, M. and Bozinovska Lazarevska, Z. (2018), "Accounting students' and employers' perceptions on employability skills in the SEE country", *European Financial and Accounting Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 55-71.

B and C category (2017), "B and C category B-schools producing un-employable pass-outs", available at: http://www.assocham.org/newsdetail.php?id=5651 (accessed 2 May 2020).

Bano, Y. and Vasantha, S. (2019), "Review on strategies for bridging the employability skill Gapin higher education", *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, Vol. 7 No. 6S5, pp. 1147-1152 (accessed 15 April 2020).

CBI (2007), *Shaping Up for the Future: The Business Vision for Education and Skills*, Confederation of British Industry, London.

CGMA (2012), *From Ledgers to Leadership: A Journey through the Finance Function*, CGMA, pp. 17-25.

Chinn, D. (2019), Ethical employee behavior in the workplace, *Bizfluent*, 29 April, available at https://bizfluent.com/info-8314154-ethical-employee-behavior-workplace.html (accessed 15 April 2020).

Cooper, C.L. and Marshall, J. (1978), *Understanding Executive Stress*, Macmillan, London.

Dhanawade, S. and Bhola, S. (2012), "Employability skills of MBA students at entry level: an employers and students perspective", *Sinhgad International Business Review*, Vol. V No. 2, pp. 151-157.

Dhar, S.K. (2012), "Employability of management students in India: some concerns and considerations", *AIMA Journal of Management and Research*, Vol. 6 No. 4.

Echternacht, L. and Wen, L. (1997), "The importance of workplace basics competencies (SCANS) as perceived by beginning business teachers and experienced business teachers", *College Student Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 37-44.

Employability Skills for the Future (2002), *Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)*.

Field, A.P. (2013), *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*, 4th ed., Sage, London.

Financial Planner Competency Profile (2007), "Financial planning standards board", available at: http://www.fpsb.org/certificationandstandards/competencyprofile.html.

Goetz, J.W., Tombs, J.W. and Hampton, V.L. (2005), "Easing college students' transition into the financial planning profession", *Financial Services Review*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 231-251.

Jackling, B. and De Lange, P. (2009), "Do accounting graduates' skills meet the expectations of employers? A matter of convergence or divergence", *Accounting Education*, Vol. 18 Nos 4-5, pp. 369-385.

Kavanagh, M. and Drennan, L. (2008), "What skills and attributes does an accounting graduate need? Evidence from student perceptions and employer expectations", *Accounting and Finance*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 279-300.

Levy, F. and Cannon, C. (2016), *The Bloomberg Job Skills Report 2016: What Recruiters Want*, Bloomberg (accessed 14 February 2018).

Moore, J. (1998), *The Etiquette Advantage*, Broadman & Holman, Nashville, TN.

Pollard, E., Hirsh, W., Williams, M., Buzzeo, J., Marvell, R., Tassinari, A., Bertram, C., Fletcher, L., Artess, J., Rednam, J. and Ball, C. (2015), *Understanding Employers' Graduate Recruitment and Selection Practices: Main Report*, Department of Business Innovation & Skills, London.

Rae, D. (2007), "Connecting enterprise and graduate employability", *Education Training*, Vol. 49 No. 8, pp. 605-619.

Saito, A.T., Savoia, J.R.F. and Famá, R. (2013), "Financial theory evolution", *International Journal of Education and Research*, Vol. 1 No. 4.

Samuels, P. (2016), *Advice on Exploratory Factor Analysis*.

Santhi, J. (2018), "Enrichment of employability skill among MBA students - a pathway to new India", *ICTACT Journal on Management Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 679-682.

ScholarshipOwl (2020), "Difference between undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate | ScholarshipOwl", available at: https://scholarshipowl.com/blog/guides/difference-between-undergraduate-graduate-and-postgraduate/ (accessed 16 February 2021).

Singh, P. and Kumar, B. (2018), "Importance of financial skill development for employability of management students", Mohapatra, S., Samayar, N., Shukla, T. and Saxena, N. (Eds), *Employable Skill Development in New India- Benchmarks and Best Practices and Perspective and Approaches*, 1st ed., Excel India Publishers, New Delhi.

Soft Skills for Hard Times (2004), *Leader to Leader*, Vol. 2004 No. 34, p. 59.

Su, W. and Zhang, M. (2015), "An integrative model for measuring graduates employability skills - a study in China", *Cogent Business and Management*, Vol. 2 No. 1.

Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (2014), *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed., Pearson Education, Harlow.

Tan, L. and Fawzi, L. (2017), "Employability skills required of accountants", *SHS Web of Conferences*, Vol. 34 (accessed 16 April 2020).

Teale, J. (2013), "Improving financial planning graduate employability through enterprise education", *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 91-106.

Urciuoli, B. (2008), "Skills and selves in the new workplace", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 211-228.

World Economic Forum (2016), *The Future of Jobs Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*.

Wells, P., Gerbic, P., Kranenburg, I. and Bygrave, J. (2009), "Professional skills and capabilities of accounting graduates: The New Zealand expectation gap?", *Accounting Education*, Vol. 18 Nos 4-5, pp. 403-420.

Yee, C.S., Goh, C., Oh, P., Neo, V. and Zin, K. (2014), *Essential Finance and Accounting Function Staff Skills, Training Needs and Challenges in Driving Productivity*, Robert Half, Singapore.

Further reading

Shetty, M. (2019), "Half of jobs at listed companies in IT, finance", *Times of India*, 11 September, available at: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/half-of-jobs-at-listed-cos-in-it-finance/articleshow/71072508.cms.

Corresponding author
Shruti Srinivasan can be contacted at: shruti.srinivasan@res.christuniversity.in

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:
www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: **permissions@emeraldinsight.com**